

IF THE WALLS COULD SPEAK

They Would "A Tale Unfold" Calculated to Harrow Up Some Souls.

PASSING OF THE OLD CAPITOL HOTEL

A Lincoln Institution Where Political Hopes Were Realized and Shattered and Much Medicine Mixed.

The final passing of the old Capitol hotel and its reopening as the "Capitol" is a matter of a good deal of interest to the older politicians of the city and the war horses of the earlier days in the state outside. The existence of the old hotel covers a period practically coincident with the epoch, in state politics that extended from the admission of the state to the beginning of the populist movement which led to the temporary downfall of the republican party. With the exception of the short time at the beginning when the Tichenor house, known to later comers as the Oriental, situated at Thirteenth and K streets, was the center of political activity in the state, and continued so until a decade ago. A history of all the political plots and counterplots that were hatched under the old roof would make material for talk till the end of another epoch, if only these stories could be told. There was so much excitement in political life in those days that the participants apparently had no time to remember details, hence material that might have served as the groundwork for a good political novel has been lost.

Origin of the House. The name was not always the Capitol Hotel. The original building was erected in 1869 by a man who had been named for its owner. This building was brick, and its nine or ten rooms occupied the corner of the block, where the latter formed the nucleus for the building of the present day. J. H. McMurtry was in the real estate and loan business in the city in those days, and furnished a part of the money for the building. Soon after its erection the corner was sold to a druggist named Scott, who occupied the ground floor with his drug store.

To judge from what followed, the hotel business did not prosper in Lincoln in those days. The mortgage was not paid when due, and the property was put up at sheriff's sale. As the holder of the mortgage Mr. McMurtry was forced to bid it in for his own protection, and for fifty-two days the real estate man was in the hotel business. It was an expensive experiment, according to Mr. McMurtry's account. At the end of fifty-two days he had run behind a little matter of \$1,500, and had had enough of hotel life. Fortunately just at this time J. J. Imhoff appeared on the scene, bought the building, rented the furniture for \$5 a month and moved in as landlord. Mr. McMurtry took in payment for the building some land in Butler county and a few city lots in Lincoln.

The Douglas hotel, which was the Commercial hotel, and the advent of Mr. Imhoff marked the beginning of its greatness. The rambling old Tichenor house could not hold the statement after the Commercial began to pick up, and the scene of political activity was removed to the corridors and back rooms of the Commercial.

Political Medicine Mixed. The making of senators was a favorite pastime of the politicians in those days, and the Capitol Hotel was the scene of many hot campaigns during legislative sessions. Mr. Imhoff extended the building, and in 1880 during it to its present size, making room for all the candidates and a reasonable number of "oil rooms." At the head of the north hallway of the second floor were two rooms, Nos. 28 and 29, which were favored as headquarters for candidates, and so many made a successful canvass from these rooms that it came to be regarded as an earnest of victory to obtain their use for a campaign. The "oil rooms" were located further down the hall. This hall in later years acquired the name of Hogan's ally, in honor of the first ward with whose statesmen it became a favorite retreat in later years when its glory as a state headquarters had passed away, and the oil place was given to shelter the city and county political headquarters.

C. H. Van Wyck was one of the first senators whose medicine was mixed at the Capitol. He had for opponents Judge O. P. Mason, A. S. Paddock and John M. Thayer. It was an exciting contest, and a profitable one—at least for Mr. Imhoff. Van Wyck had 28 and 29 for his headquarters, however, and eventually won out. Two years later Charles F. Manderson made his first campaign for the senate, and by the aid of rooms 28 and 29, with whatever other force he could muster, won against a field which included A. J. Richardson, county General Thayer and John C. Cowin of Omaha were prominent figures.

A Famous Fight. In 1887 Senator Van Wyck came forward for re-election. His old antagonist, Paddock, had stolen a march on him, however, by securing the mascot rooms on the second floor. This may not have been the deciding factor in the contest, but in the end Van Wyck returned to Nebraska City and Paddock was defeated.

Through all these years the Capitol hotel was the only place for a politician who valued his future. No politician who had any regard for his standing among men of politics would have thought of making his headquarters anywhere but at the Capitol, and the reports indicate that Mr. Imhoff understood his position so thoroughly that there was not the slightest danger of his running the hotel at a loss, as Mr. McMurtry had done. During senatorial contests in those days a small room on the second floor was considered cheap at \$5 a day, and the candidate with a suite paid as high as \$20 or \$25 a day. Van Wyck at the end of his successful campaign was a little matter of \$2,500. Upon his mildly protesting to Host Imhoff the amount was indignantly reduced to \$2,250, which was paid.

Political matters became a little more settled in the state and senatorial campaigns somewhat less exciting. Mr. Imhoff tired of the hotel business and sold out. Charles Kitchen was the buyer, and the price was \$80,000 for the building and \$30,000 for the furniture, spot cash. Mr. Kitchen spent still more money in rebuilding and refitting the place, making it in every respect a first-class hotel for the time and place. The business did not meet his expectations, however, and with rare foresight for that boom time, he saw the hard times coming and sold out to W. H. Stout, the famous prison contractor. The consideration was \$115,000, \$40,000 of which remained against the property as a first mortgage.

On the Down Grade. The times changed as Mr. Kitchen had foreseen. Two new hotels were built, the Lincoln and the Landell. These were made more attractive than the hotel owned by Stout, and political business at once began to withdraw from the Capitol. To add to his troubles the hard times came, and they were hard times indeed for the Capitol. Stout had leased the hotel to E. P. Roggen, a former secretary of state and a well-known politician of the time, who had business declined rapidly. Roggen had lost his standing in politics and could not

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BANCROFT DENIES THE YARN Says Report of Buckingham Going West is Absolutely Without Truth.

OUT THERE TO CHECK UP TIME SCHEDULES Announcements of Appointments as Published in The Bee Are Correct. Armed from West for Second Time.

"There is absolutely no truth in the report published Saturday to the effect that Mr. Buckingham will go with the Oregon Short Line."

Such was the reply given by General Manager Bancroft of the Union Pacific to a question as to whether E. E. Buckingham will go with the Short Line as general superintendent.

"Mr. Buckingham is at present in the west," continued Mr. Bancroft, "for the purpose of checking up time schedules with the Oregon Short Line, and when his work is finished there he will return to this city to resume his duties, so far as I know. I do not believe that such a move as the articles published seem to indicate ever has been under consideration."

As Mr. Bancroft is vice president and general manager of the Oregon Short Line, in addition to his being general manager of the Union Pacific, it is generally conceded that he would know if it were the intention to place Mr. Buckingham in the position of general superintendent of the Short Line. If he were so placed his appointment would be at the hands of Mr. Bancroft.

Bee's Report Again Confirmed. The report again comes from the west that the appointments as announced in The Bee Saturday to take effect on the Harrison lines are correct. It is added further, in an interview reported to be with Julius Kruttschnitt, that all the changes which are contemplated at present have been announced. It is said that Mr. Kruttschnitt and Traffic Director Stubbs soon will go to Portland to make arrangements for the transfer of Mr. Mohler to this city to take charge of the Union Pacific as vice president and general manager, and also to prepare for the assumption of authority over the Oregon Railway and Navigation company by E. E. Calvin, who, it is said, is slated for a similar position with that line.

It is believed that Mr. Kruttschnitt and Mr. Stubbs will leave Chicago in the next few days, and that these arrangements have been completed to take up their regular duties there. At last reports they were in San Francisco. Rock Island Gets Busy. If reports which come from Chicago are true, there is another active factor in the

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hold any of the old-time trade, as nothing political remained by the county political headquarters, which were comparatively unremunerative to the hotel. From the days of Proprietor Imhoff, when the profits during one term of the legislature are reported to have been over \$50,000, the business dwindled till it was a hard matter to repair, with the furniture that had reached low bid, however, the place had been sold to Harwood & Ames for \$50,000, a little more than half the price paid by Stout. Matters went from bad to worse from this time on, and when the hard times struck in earnest the mortgage was foreclosed and the building came into possession of an estate in Iowa. Dick Johnson, now of the Delmore in Omaha, managed the hotel for several years for the O. C. Bell came into Johnson's place as manager for the heirs, and he was later succeeded by John Harrop. The wolf had been at the door now for several years, becoming all the time more threatening, and finally the heirs gave up in despair and sold what was left of the hotel, now badly out of repair, with the furniture that had served in the days of Van Wyck and Paddock still in use, to Alex Berger for \$20,000, \$10,000 less than the furniture had sold for twenty years before. The leasing to the National hotel company and the complete rearrangement and fitting for a modern second class hotel marks the end of the Capitol hotel as it was from the beginning.

The most exciting of the political fights of the days when the Capitol was the center of all things political probably never to be described. Many of the men who engaged in the political wars of those days are dead and some of the incidents of the time have been forgotten, for men's memories are treacherous after thirty years.

Where the Oil Flowed. There was more money in evidence in the campaigns of those times than comes to light nowadays, and the oil room played a much larger part than it has at any time in the past. In the campaigns of the '70s and '80s, especially when a railroad fight was on, the oil room was the scene of many a "water-down a mill race," to quote a political war horse of the time. It was during one of these railroad campaigns that Senator Van Wyck enunciated his famous policy of foregoing of the campaign, the railroads, by the liberal acceptance of passes. As the enthusiastic opponent of railroad dictation in politics the senator was expected to refuse any favors at their hands. His friends were deeply shocked at one time to learn that their "Van Wyck" was in the habit of riding without paying fare, but the discovery did not phase the senator. He immediately pronounced the doctrine that riding on passes was foraging off the enemy, and one of the means of warfare that must be used against them.

The flowing champagne of those times occasionally caused a good man a world of embarrassment. In one of the senatorial campaigns of the early '80s a candidate from the First district came forward as the exponent of purity in politics and commended among other things the disavowal of liquor in political campaigns, or anywhere else. It is hardly necessary to say that he did not get enough votes to make him senator. Later in the evening on which the election had finally been settled the politicians were assembled in a noisy crowd in the lobby of the hotel when the virtuous but defeated candidate came rolling in. His hat was off, his clothing awry and he had the unsteady motion that told without words of too long a stay at the cape. The sight was too much for Church Howe. He sprang upon a table, gave an exultant whoop and shouted: "Gentlemen of the First district, here's your prohibition candidate; put him to bed."—Lincoln Journal.

Some Union Facts. Paul Patake has brought suit in the United States circuit court against the Union Pacific Railway company for \$25,000 damages. The plaintiff was run over by an engine of the defendant company at Jackson street crossing of the defendant railway company on September 7, 1902, and

lost a leg thereby. The petition maintains that the engine was running at a high rate of speed and that no effort was made to signal its approach, and that the point where the accident was incurred was a public highway. Since his injuries he has been incapacitated, from making a living and therefore asks damages in the sum named and judgment for costs of suit. IS-K Wedding Rings. Edholm, Jeweler. NO DATE SET FOR MEETING Time for Holding Democratic Congressional Convention Not Yet Decided On. F. A. Broadwell, chairman of the democratic congressional committee, was asked when he would call a meeting of the committee to arrange for a congressional convention, and replied that he did not know. "I have given the matter no particular thought," he said, "and am glad you called it to my attention. It is early yet and I have heard no desire expressed as to the time of the meeting. I don't know what the sentiment is and have no information to offer on the matter."

Settlers' Rates. To points in Minnesota, North Dakota, Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Tickets on sale by the Chicago Great Western Railway every Tuesday in March and April. For further information apply to George F. Thomas, general agent, 1512 Farnam st., Omaha, Neb. MANY WANT TO BE TEACHERS Forty or Fifty Young Women Will Take the Examination This Week. From forty to fifty young women will take the examination for a certificate of eligibility to teach in the Omaha schools at an examination that will begin at the high school Tuesday morning and continue three days. The number of candidates is larger than usual, because girls wanting to teach have been encouraged in hoping for early positions because of the shortage of instructors in the local schools.

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